



## **PATIENT INFORMATION**

### **Three way interaction for children with Autism – playing together with toys**

Play is very important for your child; it's how he develops many skills such as motor, imaginative and speech. When he plays with you, you help him to develop his social skills as well.



#### Know your child's play stage

You can know what to expect by asking when playing with your child by asking:

1. How does my child play with toys?
2. How does he communicate when playing with toys?

#### **How does my child play with toys?**

##### No play with toys

He may not play with them but explore toys by chewing or stroking them.

##### Unconventional Play

Your child may not do what you expect with toys. For example he may closely watch the wheels of a toy car rather than running it along the floor. This type of play may often be explained by your child's sensory preferences.

##### Functional Play

Your child may play with simple toys in the 'right' way such as putting a peg into a hole or shovelling sand.

##### Construction Play

Your child begins to use materials to create something for example building a house with Lego or a tower with blocks. This play involves planning ahead.



## Pretend or Symbolic Play

The child pretends to something imaginary such as drink from an empty cup or pretend to be a puppy. Pretend play is important in language development. Some children develop it spontaneously and others need to be taught. Pretend play helps your child to develop his imagination, understand how others feel, solve problems and practice communication.



## Games with Rules

These games require players to take turns and do or say things in order for the game to progress for example Hide and Seek or board games. They are predictable and therefore many people with Autism like them.

## **How Does My Child Communicate during Play?**

### Almost No Communication

The child may be just learning to play with the toy and to give simple messages to you but can't do both at the same time yet. He may do something that you can interpret as communication such as pushing your hand away or reaching for a toy.

### Nonverbal Communication

Your child may only be communicating to get his needs met such as pulling your hand to get what he wants.

### Verbal Communication

The child may use a single word to ask for a toy that he wants or to ask for help. Later he will answer simple questions, then make brief comments and let you know if he doesn't want to play.

## **Choose the Right Toys**

Choose toys according to your child's interests and what you want him to learn.

- Cause and Effect Toys – the easiest to use; they require the child to push a button or pull a lever to produce a sound or make a pop up toy appear.
- Visual-Spatial Toys – they have a built in structure that's easy for your child to work out for example puzzles, stacking toys, marble runs.
- Construction Toys – Lego, Stickle Bricks and blocks. Keep a container if your child likes taking them out and putting them in.
- Exchange Toys – A simple way to help your child learn to include you in his play is by giving an object and taking it back. Small objects such as a teddy, bean bag or ball would work well.

- People Toys – Spinning tops, wind-up toys and balloons are hard for the child to operate without help so are good when encouraging interaction. Your child will have to ask for help to make the toy go.
- Sensory and Creative Toys – For example, paint, play dough, pasta or rice.
- Pretend Play Toys – Choose ones that resemble the real objects.
- Large Play Equipment – Slides, swings and trampolines provide opportunities for movement and a chance to interact with other children.
- Games With Rules – You can make up your own games for example taking turns to hide a toy, or play a simple board game.

### **Playing With Toys Together**

During a play routine, the child needs to pay attention with both you and the toy. This may be difficult for your child and he may need help to share attention and to take turns.

Choose a motivating toy but not your child's top favourite toy as he may struggle to share it with you.

Make sure that you sit face to face with your child and that you are at eye level; this will encourage interaction.

- Make sure that the routine is predictable; say the same thing at the beginning to introduce it, in the middle and at the end.
- Make sure that there are predictable steps, this makes it easier for the child to learn the routine and to take a turn.
- Your child's turn depends on his stage of play and communication development.
- You will need to cue him to take a turn by pausing and exaggerating your language and actions. Remember to fade the cues as your child becomes familiar with the routine.
- Be lively and animated to keep it fun and keep it going.
- Play the routine often but for short bursts; three times a day for five minutes each is better than once for half an hour. Stop playing when the child is still having fun.

### **Toys and Games You May Try**

- An exchange game with a bean bag, passing it back and forth between you.
- A balloon play routine; blowing it up, letting it deflate and fly around the room then waiting for your child to ask you to do it again.
- Taking turns to roll a toy down a garage ramp or through a cardboard tube.
- Taking turns to put one brick on top of another to build a tower, then knocking it down.
- Playing picture lotto or snap.



Use the planning sheet to plan your activity. Keep it predictable; this will help your child learn when it's their turn.

Use pauses and look expectant to signal to your child that it's time for him to have a turn.

## PLAY ROUTINE PLANNING SHEET

**Activity**

**Chosen:**.....

**What will the adult say and do?**

**What might the child do (and say)?**

**Could you highlight a word or action?**

**Could you wait for a response? When and What for?**

**Could you encourage more turn-taking? How?**